

## Dharmette: Love (60) Mudita Samadhi 1

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Hello, and welcome to this first talk of the week. No, the second week, we're doing *muditā*, appreciative joy. And last week was meant to be laying down the foundation, all the foundational pieces for appreciating it, knowing it, recognizing it. And with that, now we're ready to practice it, to do the practice of appreciative joy. That is one of the four divine abodes, the *Brahmavihāras*.

And there's a classic way of practicing each of these, where we bring to mind a person or people for whom the particular form of love is evoked, that we feel it easily. And then we take that easy way of feeling it and grow it and develop it and give ourselves to it more fully. And in doing that, the principle is to always start with a person that's easiest to do it with. And it inspires this particular love the easiest for you, so it's easy to connect to it. There's less likely reservations, doubt, resistances to doing it. But it's just natural, almost, to feel it.

And then to begin exploring what it's like to let it flow, let it fill you, let it be stronger, and to let it be more and more continuous. And so as a meditation practice, this is called a *samādhi*, when there's a continuity process of just giving ourselves to this one thing during the time of the meditation. And some people call it to be immersed in it, to be absorbed in it, to be embodied within it, to feel the embodiment of it, and just breathe with it, feel it, give it over. Let the experience of it be the primary activity. And so really, to do this in the beginning, it helps to do it with someone that we really, it's easy.

So for appreciative joy, someone that you, it's natural to feel delight and joy in. And sometimes people have a hard time finding someone because no one, everyone's kind of mixed, has mixed qualities, and we have mixed feelings about them maybe. But to find the art of it is the person for whom it's easiest. It can still be mixed. And maybe because the person is happy or recently expressed their happiness and delighted someone, something.

Maybe the person has a certain kind of integrity and goodness that inspires you and is meaningful for you. And whereas thinking about this person, just somehow you connect to how this person brings you delight, sometimes even relief that such a person exists in the world. Sometimes the appreciation and gratitude for a person like this can grow when maybe we realize how few people like this we have in our life. Like, you know, you want to do it for some people, but wait, there's challenges, there's tensions, they have some difficult sides. And sometimes just, wow, here is someone for whom it's easy. Isn't this wonderful? Isn't this special?

And then to stay close to that and let the whole mind become settled, stable, absorbed, continuous, just this being as if there's nothing else you need to do. And of course, there's all kinds of ways the mind gets pulled into other things and pulled into other feelings. There might be strong underlying feelings of fear, of anxiety, that has a lot of authority and a lot of momentum. And of course it can feel like we can't sit there and be feeling joy. There's dangers in the world and anxiety to pay attention to.

And the idea here is to not believe the authority of, that it's necessary to give ourselves over and get absorbed in anxiety or fear, that we don't have to be opposed to it either, but this is not the time to give ourselves to it. This is the time to give ourselves to joy. So you might even say thank you to your anxiety and say, no, just not right now. I'll get to you later. Here, now.

And some of the hindrances to this appreciative joy might arise as we're doing it. A classic one is envy, that this can't be that this person has joy, or I want that, and so it's jealousy, envy. And to recognize that, and again, you don't have to necessarily argue or struggle with it, just say, not now, not now, we'll give you full attention later when we're ready for mindfulness of envy and jealousy. But for now, thank you, but I'll just let you be on the side here. You can be peripheral, and I'm giving myself over to this appreciative joy.

Another hindrance is a kind of giddiness, a kind of shallow excitement and a kind of bubbly joy that is more bubbly, that's more agitating than it is settling. For this become a *samādhi* of appreciative joy, there's a deep settling and opening. It's very sweet and harmonious, and there's a unification. There's like everything becomes a gathering of ourselves around this one thing, like this is where we settle. This is where we find our wholeness. So we're not fragmented. We're not agitated. We're not bubbly. It's more on the surface of things. But there's a feeling of depth of being here in a deep way.

And so practicing appreciative joy, even if it's just for this week, giving yourself to this practice is a way of expanding our capacity for joy, expanding our capacity for *samādhi*, of being

able to do something in an undistracted and undivided way. And that's part of the joy of *samādhi*, which adds, compounds the joy of appreciative joy, that we are no longer divided between the different factions within us, the different forces, the different pulls of thinking, of thoughts, of ideas, of imagination. We're not distracted by it. So an undivided, undistracted attention just here. And to cultivate it with any healthy thing, it benefits us in other ways in our life as well.

Some people cultivate appreciative joy, the *samādhi* of *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, as a preparation for doing mindfulness practice. They can get focused and concentrated doing the *Brahmavihāras*, and then they bring that stable, focused attention to doing their mindfulness practice. So the mindfulness practice benefits from that *samādhi*. So I'd encourage you for this week to spend time during the day thinking about or recognizing who are the people in your life that have some degree of happiness and joy.

Maybe it's very particular for a particular event. Maybe something happens today that you see at how delighted and happy they are. Maybe it's something as simple as they see a delightful animal and just feel kind of just so delighted and happy at the activity, the activities of the animal, and they feel joy and happiness. You know, and it's so different for them because often they don't have that. And here they have it. And so you kind of take it in, you appreciate it, you make room for it, you share in the joy and maybe even have a kind of silent wish. May it continue for them.

In which you don't distract them from it. They're appreciating, they're having joy at seeing children play in the park, and you appreciate it for a moment, and then you say, well, that's all fine and good, but do you realize some world difficulty? And you're distracting them. You're kind of changing the topic. But what it's like to stay on topic with the joy, their happiness, and be able to share in it and delight in it, join them in it?

So this appreciative, the *samādhi* of appreciative joy can be strengthened or become stronger, more practiced, if we begin searching for places to have appreciative joy in our daily life. And the *samādhi* of appreciative joy gives us a greater capacity to share in the joy of others, the delight of others, in real time when it's happening for a particular reason. And it is a life, it is a way that to realize how much joy begets joy. And this is a great gift we can give to the world, that we can enjoy other people, appreciate them, and thereby they feel seen, they feel appreciated, their joy has more chance to continue, to live in them.

And in some way, we are contributing to a world of more happiness in the world than more suffering. And I don't think we need to worry that we're somehow going to become imbalanced in the joy, or we're not going to see what's really going on in the world, all the suffering.

The suffering is always going to be there, waiting for us, ready for us. And the ability to relax and open and be available to appreciative joy will translate, will prepare us to have a healthy opening and an ability to be present for suffering as well in a good, healthy way. So appreciative joy is a wonderful practice, and that's what we'll be doing this week. Thank you.